

99-01-03b

We resume our study now in Genesis chapter 17, we're looking at God's statement, reiteration of His covenant promises to Abram. Of course, this is another thing that I find particularly meaningful is that God repeats Himself, God reviews, you know, God goes back and covers things He's covered in the past, but in each case He expands and clarifies and enhances the specifics of His covenant promises to Abram. And we've seen here in verse 1 of chapter 17 that when Abram was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, I am almighty God, walk before me and be blameless.

We've already seen that the first part of this injunction, the first part of the statement of this goal is our part, the personal responsibility, specifically here it's Abram's part, to walk himself before God. This is before the face of God, literally. And it's another one of those things that is more evident in the original language, perhaps, than in English.

Let me just direct your attention back to chapter 16, verse 12, when the angel of the Lord is speaking to Hagar, talking about Ishmael, and he says, you're with child, you'll bear a son, you'll call his name Ishmael, because the Lord has heard your affliction. And God's mercy on them transcends the source of the trouble, the sin, and the failure, and the lack of faith that engendered this whole situation. God's compassion on those who are oppressed transcends it.

And he says about Ishmael in verse 12, he shall be a wild man. And this doesn't mean wild man like Jerry Reed is a wild man, or he has a whole album called Alabama Wild Man. He's a wild man when he plays the guitar.

He's not talking about being unruly and uncontrollable, so much as not constrained by the bounds of what you would consider civilization and culture. You're not going to find Ishmael with a white picket fence and a neatly clipped lawn. He's going to be out.

And this, of course, is the origin of the Bedouin lifestyle, out on the fringes, out on the very edges between where people dwell and the wilderness. And they make their living in a transitional way. They camp for a while in tents, and then they move on.

This is the nomadic lifestyle. And that's what it means when it says he's going to be a wild man. Wild in the sense of untamed.

You don't find Ishmael building big cities and putting in aqueducts and statues to himself. He's going to be out. He likes freedom.

And it's the same sort of freedom that Hagar was seeking when she left the household of Abram. The freedom that she was looking for and being out from under the control and the behest of others. For Ishmael, that's his heritage.

He's going to be out from under, so to speak. His hand shall be against every man, and

every man's hand against him. He's not going to be forming alliances.

This is something people ought to reflect on today in international politics. When they keep trying to build up all kinds of treaties and alliances with the Arab nations, they're not built that way. Their minds don't work that way.

Their heritage from God is to be loners. They don't ally. They don't amalgamate.

They don't absorb and blend and become a happy fourth-handed poker or anything around the table. They like being out by themselves. And it has ever been thus.

And you can't put a lot of stock in the future of a treaty with the descendants of Ishmael. They're just not built that way. They like to go their own way.

And you can just look at the recent history of the Middle East. Look at the long history of the Middle East, and you see that this has been borne out through generation after generation. So it's a caution.

It doesn't mean that they can't be trusted. It just means you've got to watch out. They're individualists.

He shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren. It says in the New King James, what we saw when we went through this the first time, that this is against the face of, or to the east of. This phrase is also used to mean to the east.

But it has a double entendre here because it means, it is the word for against, and then the word for face. Against the face of his brethren. And it means in opposition to, or apart from.

To the east of, in some cases. So here you have Ishmael against the face of his brethren, and then you have Abram called to live before the face of God. Before, when God says walk before me, it's literally in front of my face.

Walk yourself in front of my face. Walk in the presence of God. So there's a contrast there.

And we know that even though there is a recognition of who God is, I think that both Hagar and Ishmael are believers, yet they're not going to be the chosen line, the chosen seed, the covenant promises are not going to reach their ultimate fulfillment in this line because that heart that wants to walk before God is not there. Ishmael wants to be out in the wilds. And God predicts this of him and describes it even before his birth.

Walk before me and be blameless. Now this is a pretty good trick. I think all of us realize very early in life that we incur blame on ourselves.

And in looking at the Hebrew word tamim, I was searching about trying to find a good

English synonym because we have a lot of words that are the negative of something else. You have blame and then you have blameless. Well, tamim isn't the negative of some other word.

To render this into English, this is not the Hebrew word for blame with a negative in front of it. So blameless is not really the best translation. You can't say above reproach because this doesn't mean reproach and to be above.

Tamim is a positive word. It's not the negation of a negative word, if you catch my meaning here. So what does tamim really mean? Blameless is not the best translation.

So tamim, we need to take a look at it and understand exactly what it means because just as we saw in our scripture reading this morning, this is the essence of relationship with God. It's expressed in the form of a covenant here. But walking before God, walking with God, walking in the presence of God and whatever tamim means, this is the essence of relationship with God.

If we understand this, we're going to understand an awful lot about our own walk with the Lord, our own calling. What does tamim really mean? It comes from the verb tamam, T-A-M-A-M, which at its core means to be complete. It is similar to the word we have in Greek, teleo.

Teleos is often translated perfect or complete, mature. Over in Ephesians you have until we all grow up to the standard of a mature man or a perfect man in the King James, and this is teleo. And a lot of times in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, tamam and its derivatives will be translated by teleos or teleo, which means to be complete, to not have any gaps, to not have any lacks, gaps, flaws, some form of incompleteness.

So we find this used in contexts other than the spiritual and it helps us understand what the meaning is. For example, over in 1 Samuel chapter 16, this is when Samuel goes to visit the household of Jesse to anoint a king and he looks at the first six or seven sons there. He sees all these tall, strapping young men, some of them are in the army, and he goes down each one and God doesn't give him the thumbs up for any of the sons of Jesse.

So Samuel turns to Jesse and he says, is this all your children? And he uses the word from tamam. Is this the complete set of children that God has given you? And of course there's one missing. They're not complete, they're not all there.

They send out to the field and here comes David, the youngest. Over in Joshua chapter 10 and verse 13, it's used to talk about an entire day. You have the time when Joshua spoke to the Lord, when they're fighting the Amorites, and he says, sun stand still over Gibeon and moon in the valley of Ajalon.

So the sun stood still and the moon stopped till the people had revenge upon their enemies. Is this not written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day. And that word whole there is tamim.

Very same word we have in 17.1. A whole, an entire day, a complete day. Ezekiel uses this word tamim to talk about a vine that is healthy. A healthy vine.

This is over in Ezekiel chapter 15 and verse 5. You look out in a vineyard. We drove down through California and saw the vineyards. I've been in Germany, which to me looks like one big vineyard broken up by a few little towns and roads.

And parts of central and northern California look the same way. But you have the great vines there. And in Ezekiel 15.5 this same phraseology is applied, symbolically of course.

But the word of the Lord comes to Ezekiel in chapter 15 saying, Son of man, how is the wood of the vine better than any other wood? The vine branch which is among the trees of the forest. Is wood taken from it to make any object? Can men make a peg from it to hang any vessel on? Instead it is thrown into the fire for fuel. The fire devours both ends of it and its middle is burned.

This is the origin of the old burning your candle at both ends. Here you're burning the vine at both ends and the middle. Indeed when it was whole no object could be made from it.

How much less will it be useful for any work when the fire has devoured it and it is burned? So when it says, Indeed when it was whole, when it was tamim. Even when it was complete, when it was all there. You couldn't make anything from it.

How much less will it be useful for any work when the fire has devoured it and it is burned? Therefore thus says the Lord God, Like the wood of the vine among the trees of the forest which I have given to the fire for fuel, so I will give up the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Set my face against them, they will go out from one fire to another. This is a fire of judgment.

What's the point here in this picture? The vine which represents Israel, Jerusalem and its inhabitants. It only has one purpose. You can't do anything with a vine by way of construction.

You don't say, Oh boy, what a beautiful coffee table made of grapevine wood. Or let me have you sit over here in this fine chair that I wove from grapevine. Grapevine is only good for one thing.

What's grapevine good for? Bearing fruit. That's the only thing it's good for. Jesus says, I am the vine, you are the branches, abide in me and bear fruit.

He doesn't say abide in me and you'll grow and we can chop you down and make a fine table leg out of you. We only have one purpose. Israel, the people of God, exists to bear fruit to God.

It's cultivated to bear fruit. No other purpose. So, tamim is used of the healthy whole fruit bearing vine.

The sacrifices that were to be brought to the altar are described as tamim. Remember the lamb without spot and without blemish? Well, the lamb without spot was said to be tamim, perfect, without gap, without flaw, without any, not a withered leg or a floppy ear or a missing tooth or a broken horn. Complete and entire.

It has the idea, and here's where we're going to come to our English definition, at least my definition, for tamim, and it means integrity. Integrity. It's a positive word.

Tamim means integrity. The integrity is not compromised. It's all there.

That's what integrity means in English. It's an integral thing. All of its parts are there.

There's no gaps. There's no flaws. There's no cracks, no imperfections, no missing parts, no holes.

It's complete and entire. Wholeness and soundness gives us the idea, in a positive way, of no fault, no blame. This is where the idea of blameless comes in.

But it's not the idea of without blame. It's not the idea of without fault. Instead, it's the positive side, a statement of entirety and completeness, a statement of totality.

So God says, walk before me and have integrity. We don't have a verb for integrity. We have the noun, be integral, but be complete.

Walk before me and be complete in the sense of integrity. No missing parts. So the sacrifice is without blemish.

For example, in Leviticus chapter 22, verses 21 and 22, where the description of the animals to be brought to the Lord, He says, don't bring me your lop-eared, your lame, your deficient. Sacrifices should be tamim. They should be entire.

And of course, you have the equivalent over in 1 Peter, when Peter describes Jesus Christ as the Lamb without spot and without blemish, over in 1 Peter 1.19. One's speech, the way you communicate with others, can be described as tamim. Over in Amos chapter 5 and verse 10, speak the complete truth. This is the problem that some of our people get into court situations and testify before grand juries and they raise their right hand and they say, I swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

Well, people like to gloss over that middle part, the whole truth. I'm going to tell the part

of the truth that doesn't damage me. I'm going to present the truth in a way that puts the best face on it.

Well, it's easy to see that in others, but we tend to do the same thing, don't we? We don't always speak the whole truth. We don't always walk in complete integrity. We walk in the integrity that's convenient.

We walk in the integrity that doesn't incur pain or loss or embarrassment. But the Bible talks about one's speech and communication where it's tamim, it's complete, it's whole. It's often said that the two hardest words in English to utter are, I'm sorry.

It was my fault. I am responsible. I failed.

And it's a wonderful mark of our growth when we reach the point, because really it's a mark of humility to be able to admit fault. It's our pride that keeps us from wanting to own up and to recognize our responsibility for a failure. And one of the true measures of our Christian life and our Christian growth is when we can look at our failures and acknowledge them and say, that was my fault.

I'm sorry. I did that. And that's a part of integrity, because it's at the very point that we acknowledge our failure and our gaps that God can fill them.

And God can take the shattered vessel and mend it and make it something even more useful than it was before it was broken. And that's the reason that confession and acknowledgement of sin is so important in our personal walk with God. It's something we need to make a habit of, is acknowledging.

It's healthy. It's good for our humility. And the more knowledge and understanding we have of God's Word, the easier it is to see those cracks and gaps.

Bring them before God and let Him fill them up. And let Him restore our integrity, restore our blamelessness. So this begins to answer the question, when God says, walk yourself in front of my face.

Walk yourself before me. This is an attitude of heart. This is a perspective that we have, isn't it? I'm walking right under God's eyes.

God sees me. God hears me. God knows me.

What am I doing? How am I living? What am I deciding? What are my priorities? Be blameless. Be tamim. Walk in integrity.

Don't leave gaps. Don't leave holes. Don't let failures go unresolved.

We're going to have them. We're going to sin. We're going to fail.

We're going to mess up. But we can still be tamim because God can repair. God can eradicate.

And God can work all things together for good to those who love Him, to those who walk before Him. God is tamim. God has complete integrity.

He is perfect in knowledge. This word occurs quite frequently in the book of Job. It's fascinating.

One of these days I hope we get to go through the book of Job and we'll see this. But God is said to be perfect in knowledge. His knowledge is complete.

There are no gaps. There are no things that have slipped under without God's knowledge. Job 37.16 The actions of God are tamim.

In Deuteronomy 32.4 2 Samuel 22.31 God's law is perfect. God's law is complete. Psalm 19.7 So God's knowledge is complete.

Job 37.16 His acts are tamim. Deuteronomy 32.4 2 Samuel 22.31 And His law is like God. Tamim.

Psalm 19.7 From this physical idea of no gaps, no imperfections, no lack, comes the ethical sense of the word, both the verb and its derivatives, so that decisions can be tamim. You want the choices that are made, the designations that are made to be perfect. You can find this in 1 Samuel 14.

This is where Saul and the armies are needing to make a decision and they want to cast lots. They want the decision of the lots to be tamim, to be just. In fact, what do we know about decision making in Israel, especially back in the early days of the priesthood? You had the high priest wearing the vestment, the twelve stones and so forth.

How did the kings seek the guidance of God? The urim and thumim. Guess where the word thumim comes from? Tamam. It comes from this verb.

Literally, urim is from or, a guttural, and then or in Hebrew, which means light. So you have literally urim and thumim. You notice the im on the end of those makes them plural.

It literally means the lights and the perfections. Of course, urim starts with alpha or aleph in Hebrew, and thumim starts with tav, the first and last letters of the alphabet. So when God says, I am alpha and omega, the beginning and the end, Christ says that.

He says, I'm the first letter and the last letter. Well, the urim and the thumim, the urim starts with aleph, which is the beginning. What's the first thing that happened in the beginning? Genesis 1. God said, let there be light.

That's the beginning of everything. It's the beginning of history, is light. And that's the urim.

What is the end and the finishing up and the fulfillment and completing of all things? It's thumim. It's tamam. So you have a great interplay of ideas in these words.

And the decisions that were made by lot, by the consulting the urim and thumim, and of course I demonstrated that for you. It's my belief and understanding that this was sort of like two dominoes or two coins, two flat things that you could more or less toss in the air, and each one has an aleph on one side and a tav on the other. And so two alephs is a yes, two tavs is a no, and if you get one aleph and one tav, that's inconclusive.

And all of the casting of lots in Israel, you notice almost all of the questions that are recorded in Scripture for which the urim and thumim were consulted were yes and no. Is it the tribe of Judah? No. Is it the tribe of Dan? No.

When they were trying to find Achan and the sin in the camp that kept Israel from victory, Saul and Jonathan, somebody violated the king's command and it comes all the way down to between Saul and Jonathan. And of course Saul, who is guilty of iniquity, Saul doesn't cast the urim and thumim the last time to choose between him and Jonathan. He assumes, well it's got to be Jonathan, it couldn't have been me.

If he had cast that last lot, it would have fallen on Saul because he's the one that gave the rash command. He's the one that sinned. But when the lots accurately go by tribe to clan to family, all the way down to Saul and Jonathan, then Saul doesn't cast them the last time.

It's very fascinating, but that's another study. So the decision by lots in 1 Samuel 14.41 is said to be tamim, to be perfect, ethically sound. Decisions made by men in Judges 9.16 and Judges 9.19, I wish we had time to turn to all these passages.

David's heart, Asaph writes a psalm, Psalm 78, and it's a long psalm, and down in verse 72 he talks about the heart of David and he says it is blameless, it is ethically sound, it is tamim. And this of course is the heart of one who walks before God and is tamim. These are the ones for whom God can fulfill all of His covenant promises.

To fulfill all of the law of God, to perfectly fulfill His commands, is mentioned in Joshua 4.10. To keep perfectly the commands is to be tamim. To make one's way perfect. Job is described as an upright man, perfect in his ways.

His tamim, his fulfillment of God's commands is perfect. And Job says this, I think of himself over in Job 22.3. All Israel is charged by God, just as Abram is here in 17.1 of Genesis. All Israel is to be blameless.

Deuteronomy 18.13. Many other passages. 2 Samuel 22.33. Psalm 101.2 and 6. To have

a perfect heart. Turn with me to Psalm 101.

Right at the beginning of this psalm, which is a psalm of David, he says, I will sing of mercy and justice. To you, O Lord, I will sing praises. Verse 2, he says, I will behave wisely in a perfect way.

Does this mean that David is going to be wise every time and is never going to commit a sin? I mean, look at the life of David. You know that that's not the case. But he says, I will behave wisely in a perfect way.

Tamim. O, when will you come to me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. What we might say in English here to paraphrase or to elaborate this, a perfectly restored heart, a blameless heart, a heart of integrity.

Doesn't mean that we never sin or we never fail, but it means that we're not guilty of failing to avail ourselves of the remedy. To go to God for healing, for cleansing. This same David says, purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean.

Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. And we see throughout the psalms David talking about walking in the integrity of his heart. God can restore that integrity.

God creates that integrity. And that is what we seek. That's our goal.

I will behave wisely in a perfect way. I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. How does he do that? He goes on in Psalm 101 to describe it.

I will set nothing wicked before my eyes. This is one of the great scourges in our modern day because of media and photography and the Internet and everything else. There's a huge pornography problem in our culture and in Christianity and the church.

There is a huge percentage of students in seminary, of pastors, of Christian leaders, as well as all the rest of us who are just in Christian life that can fall prey to putting something bad in front of our eyes. It's so easy on the Internet. I've just spent the past four weeks at Buckner installing filter software because the Internet will push this.

You can be looking for the most innocent thing and because a word has a double entendre or because sometimes for no good reason at all, you will have filth pushed at you across the Internet. It's like walking into a library and going to the card catalog and saying, oh, here's the encyclopedia section. I want to do a book report on Abraham Lincoln.

Right there in the midst of it, here's Penthouse Magazine or Hustler or some other form of pornography. It's hard to avoid. So now you have to actually put preventative measures in place to try to screen some of this out.

David says, I will set nothing wicked before my eyes. We talk about walking before God's

eyes. We have to watch what we put before our own eyes because that is what's going to occupy our mind.

I hate the work of those who fall away. It shall not cling to me. This is another danger.

We can become hypercritical. We see the flaws and we see the damage and the dangers that surround us. We see the perversions and the twisting of truth that takes place within the church.

We can become occupied with that and set that wickedness before our eyes all the time. And if we become occupied with others, what has happened? Subjectivity, eyes on others, eyes on self. Well, I haven't fallen victim to that particular failure.

If we set that kind of thing before our eyes, we're going to lose our integrity. We will not be walking before the Lord blameless. So how do we accomplish this? We know that the charge that God gives to Abram is our charge.

That if we want to inherit the promises, if we want to receive the blessings and be at the very center of God's plan, we have to walk before God and be blameless. How do we do it? Well, David tells us how he did it. He says, I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.

Where does it start? It starts inside our own dwelling. It starts in our closest relationships. It starts in our marriage.

It starts with our children. It starts in our personal dealings. What about our finances? What about our taxes? What about the integrity of our walk when it comes to our own life in our own dwelling place? I will walk within my house with a tamim heart.

Nothing to be ashamed of. I will set nothing wicked before my eyes. I hate the work of those who fall away.

It shall not cling to me. We can see it and hate it, but it's not going to cling to us. We're not going to define ourselves by what we are not.

Well, I am not a Bible-thumping, pulpit-pounding fundamentalist. I am not a legalist. I am not a this or a that.

I am not a part of that denomination. I'm not a part of that aberration. I'm not a part of that Holy Ghost, hand-waving, misguided crowd on TV.

It doesn't cling to us. That's not what defines us. That's not what occupies us.

A perverse heart shall depart from me. We're going to have a perverse heart. It's going to come up.

We're going to fail, but it will depart. I will not know wickedness. Wickedness is not going to be my familiar friend.

It may poke its head in from time to time, but it's going to get the bums rushed. Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, him I will destroy. This is a big problem, secret slander.

We see and we talk. Unconsciously or consciously, we've got a little car jack under the platform on which we sit. We keep ratcheting with slander.

We say, boy, they sure have things messed up. We jack ourselves up higher and higher. Our little platform rises.

I really enjoy the Warner Brothers cartoon where you've got Elmer Fudd and Bugs Bunny. There's some big opera, The Barber of Seville. That music is playing in the background.

At one point, they're both in barber chairs. One of them gets higher, and then the other one gets higher. Pretty soon, they're on these astronomically high barber poles.

They're up at the top in the chairs. We do that with slander. That's exactly what we do.

Anytime we dwell on the failures of others, which are present. Of course, if you think about it, somebody else is over there talking about us in the same way. Boy, that Sam, is he ever out in the weeds.

There's probably a lot more people out there doing the very same thing. We don't want to be guilty of that. That is not walking before God blameless.

That is chasing after self-justification and lacking integrity. It's the exact opposite. How do we make these things true in our lives? This is how.

These are the concrete things. Paul says over in 2 Corinthians, examine yourself to see if you're in the faith. Well, where do we look to see if we're walking before God blameless? This is one of the places.

It starts with our mental attitude. Mental attitude sins. You know the three categories of sin that a lot of us have learned since we were long ago in the faith.

You've got sins of attitude, sins of the mind, sins of the heart. You've got sins of the tongue. And then we have overt sins.

It's easy to focus on the overt sins. Stealing, murdering, adultery, this sort of thing. But overt sins, that's the ultimate fruit of sins that began earlier.

Sins of the tongue and originally sins of the heart. And this is where David starts. He says, I'm going to walk in my house with a heart of integrity.

I'm going to cleanse that perverse heart. I'm going to drive it out the door. It's not going to cling to me.

It's going to depart from me. I will not know wickedness. I'm going to get the wickedness.

Just like David had to literally do in the land of Israel. Before the temple could be built, he had to drive the enemies out. He had to finish the work of driving out the Amorites.

Then you get to sins of the tongue. Whoever slanders his neighbor secretly, him I will destroy. The one who has a haughty look and a proud heart, him I will not endure.

Where are you going to put your eyes? My eyes shall be on the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me. He who walks in a perfect way, he shall serve me. I'm going to associate myself with others who want to walk the walk of integrity.

Who want to walk before God with a pure heart. Verse 7, he who works deceit shall not dwell within my house. He who tells lies shall not continue in my presence.

We can't do anything about the deceit and the slander and the sin out in the world. We have one vote out of many for what happens in the government. We can't control what happens in other cities, in other countries, in other neighborhoods, in other families, in other places, on the media, the people at the broadcast networks for different Christian television and so forth.

I don't have any control over that. I can't go out there and burn it down much as I might want to. What I can do is exercise responsibility and exercise influence where I do have it.

I do have authority and I do have influence in my own household, in my own periphery. I can choose where to work, with whom to associate, with whom to spend time, on whom I'm going to fix my gaze. It's easy to look around in the government to look at those that have faults and have displayed them and continue to display them and exercise them to everyone's detriment.

It's easy to focus on that. But Paul says, whatsoever things are good, right, noble, lovely, of good report, the true things. David says the same thing here.

My eyes will dwell on the faithful of the land. They will dwell with me. The one who walks in a perfect way will serve me.

The one who works to seat shall not dwell within my house. He may dwell someplace, but he's not going to dwell in my house. He who tells lies will not continue in my presence.

They may be out there, but they're not going to be in my presence. Early I will destroy all the wicked of the land, that I may cut off all the evildoers from the city of the Lord. Of

course, this is David speaking as king.

And under his watch, he's going to have many descendants who are not going to be faithful kings. But David says, this is going to be the policy everywhere that I have authority. So this is how we can make Tamin a reality in our lives.

Turn with me to 1 Kings 2. 1 Kings 2. David's son, Solomon, learned his doctrine, gained his understanding of the plan of God, the purpose of God, the character of God at the feet of his father. He is now king in 1 Kings 2. And so the days of David are drawing near that he should die. And the final instructions that David gives to Solomon are here in chapter 2. He says to his son in verse 2 of 1 Kings 2, I go the way of all the earth.

I'm dying. Be strong, therefore, and prove yourself a man, and keep the charge of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies. It's a wonderful thing to do a word study on each of these statements.

We tend to think, well, there's just the Word of God. It's all one thing. Each of these emphasizes an aspect of God's Word.

His ways, His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies. As it is written in the Law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn. David tells Solomon, if you keep these things, you will prosper.

God will prosper you. God will bless you. It is a conditional promise.

Keep these things, so that, in verse 4, the Lord may fulfill His Word which He spoke concerning me, saying, if your sons take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth. Very same phrase used in Genesis 17, verse 1. God says, walk before me. He said the very same thing to David 800, 1000 years later.

If your sons take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, He said, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel. There's a promise that God gave to David. He said, you will not fail to have a man on the throne of Israel forever.

Well, where is the man on the throne of Israel today? He's not there. What happened to the promise of God? Well, it is a conditional promise. And the sons of David did not heed the ways, statutes, commandments, judgments, and testimonies.

They did not take heed to their way, to walk before God in truth with all their heart and with all their soul. And that's why there does lack a man on the throne of Israel in this day. When will that promise be resurrected? When will the fallen tent of David be restored? When Jesus Christ, who is the definition of integrity, returns and sits on the throne of his Father.

So David says, and reminds Solomon of this fact, this is the charge, this is the goal, this is the opportunity that we have as believers, that every believer has had, from Adam to the last human being born on the planet, walk before God and be blameless. Solomon reiterates this when he dedicates the temple. In his prayer of dedication over in 1 Kings 8, Solomon in 1 Kings 8.22, stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the assembly of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven and said, Lord God of Israel, there is no God in heaven above or on earth below like you who keep your covenant and mercy with your servants who walk before you with all their hearts.

Who does God keep his covenant with? Servants who walk before you with all their hearts. You have kept what you promised your servant David, my father. You have both spoken with your mouth and fulfilled it with your hand, as it is this day.

Therefore, Lord God of Israel, now keep what you promised your servant David, my father, saying, you shall not fail to have a man sit before me on the throne of Israel only if your sons take heed to their way, that they walk before me as you have walked before me. All of the covenants of God are conditioned, and this is the condition. God does fulfill his promises to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

Why? Because they walked before him. It wasn't that they were perfect. It wasn't that they didn't make colossal mistakes and catastrophic failures, but they always returned.

They always came back, and God mended the breach. God restored their integrity and restored their standing because they sought him. They returned to him, and they walked before him.

You have the very same thing all down through history. Remember what Paul says over in Romans? He says, Israel has messed up in a big way. They missed it.

They missed it with the law. They misunderstood the law. They made it a system of righteousness instead of a reflection and a measuring stick for true integrity of heart.

He says, even though they have been cut off, they are a branch that has been broken out of the tree, they are beloved. Why? They are beloved for the sake of the fathers. God's covenant promises of descendants that the offspring would be blessed and would be a blessing.

God will work even those failures together for good. But it's not the best way. It's not the perfect way.

Ishmael is a descendant of Abram, and he is going to be perpetuated. He's going to be many nations. There will be kings in his line, but he's a wild man.

He's out and about. He is an offspring of Abram, but he's not the line of promise. He is the fruit of Abram's effort.

Sarah and Abram got together. They tried to create fulfillment of God's plan and purpose. This goes on today.

This is the lifestyle that is pushed at us by Christian media and Christian teachers, that we should go out and manufacture our righteousness. We should go out and fulfill the plan and the purpose of God with our efforts, with our design, with our plans, with our organizations. God says there is a better way.

There is a more perfect way, and it is the way of the vine. It's the way where that perfect vine, the whole, complete vine bears fruit. God waters.

God fertilizes. God hedges about. God rains down on the field, and it bears its fruit.

And if we focus on the integrity of our way, if we seek to walk before God in truth, that's the mission. That's the calling, and that's the goal. It's an easy thing to obscure.

It's an easy thing to forget. I think it has been obscured and forgotten in much of our Christianity today, but it's right here in the pages of Scripture. So when God speaks to Abram, and he says, walk before me and be blameless, he's speaking to us.

Walk yourself in front of my face, and have integrity. Let's close in prayer. We thank you, Father, for the opportunity that you have given us.

Because of your grace, and because of your power, because of the work of Jesus Christ on the cross, it is possible for us to fulfill this great calling, this great challenge, to walk before you. And even in your sight, and in front of your eyes, to be blameless, to have perfection and wholeness, and be qualified to bear fruit that is pleasing in your sight. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will take these things, and restore us, and transform us through them, so that we live in a way that pleases you, and glorifies our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

In whose name we pray, Amen.